

PROCEEDINGS

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DISCUSSION OF
PROCEEDINGS PAPERS

508, 710

CITY PLANNING DIVISION

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Discussion of
"PHILADELPHIA CAPITAL BUDGET AND PROGRAM PROCEDURES"

by Charles A. Howland
(Proc. Paper 508)

CHARLES A. HOWLAND,¹ A. M. ASCE.—In his discussion of the paper contributed by the writer, Mr. Golze adds pertinent comments from the experience and practices of the Program Coordination and Finance Division, U. S. Department of the Interior. These comments are most interesting to the writer and do much to clarify the problems of capital programming and budgeting. Also, Mr. Golze suggests further explanation of certain Philadelphia practices which the writer, in an effort to be brief, did not expand. The following additional information is offered.

Mr. Golze inquires concerning the financing of operating costs during test periods in Philadelphia. If a contractor is required to turn over to the city a facility capable of performing certain work according to specifications, he must make the necessary tests. City engineers, however, may participate in such tests or make tests themselves. Most large undertakings are accomplished by a series of contracts for the component parts, and each part must be in proper operating condition before it is accepted by the city.

Mr. Golze comments on the financing of alterations and betterments. It is the intent in Philadelphia that the cost of maintaining a facility in good operating condition shall be met out of current revenue. However, extensive rehabilitation or an addition to an existing facility may be included in the capital budget and program.

With regard to the practice of limiting appropriated funds to the budget year and the first six months of the following year, Mr. Golze's comment touches upon a phase of capital budgeting that has been discussed in Philadelphia. The limitation covers both ability to encumber funds by contract or direct expenditure and to expend them as contract work proceeds. Current reports of the Director of Finance show, for each project, the amount financed, the amount encumbered broken down into amount expended and obligation balance, and the amount unencumbered. It has been suggested that means should be available to finance, as a single budget item, a project to be constructed over a period of several years. This has not been possible under existing limitations.

Mr. Golze states, "... it would appear that the several departments of the Philadelphia city government have authority to include in the capital budget, on their own initiative, those new proposals which have passed the planning stage ...". The writer is sure that he did not imply this. Actually, the departments can only recommend, to the City Planning Commission through the Director of Finance, projects for the capital budget and six-year program. The City Planning Commission selects from the projects thus received those which it will include in the budget and program to be recommended to the city Council through the Mayor. Projects originally initiated by the Planning Commission may also be included. City Council alone can authorize construction

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and does this by adopting, each year, a capital program, and a capital budget which appropriates the city funds required for the first year of the program.

In Philadelphia, the capital programming and budgeting work continues throughout the year. While intensive work on the next program and budget extends roughly from April, when the project reports are received, to December, amendments of budgets currently in effect must be processed. Also, the comprehensive planning activities relate to the program, since it is by means of the program that the city's share in effecting comprehensive planning is accomplished. While the eight members of the staff of the Division of Projects have the chief responsibility for capital programming, all divisions of the Planning Commission's staff are involved at one time or another. The Philadelphia experience has followed that of Mr. Golze, namely, the amount in dollars represented by the capital program has little relation to the work of preparing it.

The Philadelphia practice with regard to cost accounting is as follows. Funds, both from operating revenue and loan funds, are allocated to each project by the Director of Finance according to the amount appropriated in the capital budget. These funds can be encumbered by contracts or direct payments. As previously mentioned, the Director of Finance keeps current records for each project showing the amount financed, the obligation balance, amount expended, and unencumbered amount. Monthly statements include further details such as account code, adjusted authorization, per cent financed, total expenditures and obligations (amount encumbered), and amounts of the unencumbered balance that are and are not financed. Upon completion of a project, expenditures may be somewhat less than the estimate upon which the appropriation was based and the funds were allocated. In this event, the excess amount becomes a recredit and is available for appropriation to do other work. Should it develop that the expenditures for the project will be more than the appropriated amount and the 10 per cent adjustment, which the Director of Finance is permitted to make, will be inadequate to meet it, the budget must be amended by the city Council.

"IS SUBSIDY NECESSARY FOR ADEQUATE MASS TRANSIT"

by Charles E. DeLeuw
(Proc. Paper 710)

E. L. TENNYSON,¹—The June paper by Charles E. DeLeuw, M. ASCE, "Is Subsidy Necessary for Adequate Mass Transit?" is most timely and realistic. About the only room for difference with Mr. DeLeuw is with his statement that more seat miles (productivity) per man hour can be obtained only "through the operation of rail vehicles in trains."

From June 22 to 24, a national cross section of planners, transit managers, downtown business men, and public officials met on the University of Chicago campus to discuss "The Nation's Urban Transit Crisis". It was brought out that 30,000,000 persons per day in the U. S. are paying transit fares and almost all of these are essential riders, whereas much automobile movement is unessential. In every important city, over half of the people who are in the central city got there by transit, and in the largest cities this proportion rises to 85 and 90%. Only if cities are abandoned, can we plan to do without transit. If we do not plan for transit, cities will have to be almost abandoned.

These men, gathered together for a common purpose from a varied background agreed unanimously on a few principles that must be recognized if progress is to be achieved. On busy routes, buses have failed as a suitable transit vehicle. Losses of both riding and revenue are the long range result. Their advertised flexibility is offset by their being "mousetrapped" in traffic, as well as by their unpleasant riding qualities. It was agreed almost as if Mr. DeLeuw were there, that public works must not be limited to automobiles, but rather must have private transit rights of way as a primary essential to a workable traffic plan. Monorails, perhaps, but now we need any kind of rails so that a few employees can move a large number of people rapidly through the congested areas direct to origin or destination, or both. Most likely, the most important locus is the downtown destination.

To differ with Mr. DeLeuw, trains are not essential to the solution of the universal traffic problem, but rail vehicles are. The standard modern PCC electric car, although capable of train operation, can meet the needs of most situations, at least in non-rush hours, by single car operation. A single car, of the type used between Cleveland and Shaker Heights is universally adaptable to street car service, rapid transit, or both even on a single run. One of these cars can today, and does, produce 1240 seat-miles per man-hour, compared with 816 sm/h by the biggest newest bus on an expressway, except at the terminals. That 50% difference is the difference between saving a city and blighting it. Where expressways are not located where bus riders want to go, buses in express service on arterial streets can not exceed 714 seat-miles per man hour, and on rainy or snowy days they can not do this. Can we justify a transit service that can not function when it rains or snows?

1. Traction Commissioner, Youngstown, Ohio.

Engineers and officials must get over the notion that only big cities need rapid transit. Every city suffering from congestion needs it. Since all who are interested agree that highway aid programs must be extended to mass transit, it would be foolish to offer that aid to our existing services that hold the patrons' contempt. Aid must flow to popular and proper transit systems, which means rail private rights of way. Many cities can convert plain street car lines into rapid transit, a few may need all-new rapid transit systems of the New York type. Many can avail themselves of railroad commuter services if aid and technological advances are coupled to universal transfers with surface services.

The world should know that almost everyone responsible for the proper transportation of urban people agrees that we cannot aid the auto without bankrupting mass transit without replacing it. As Mr. DeLeuw says, the job is to convince the public and the authorities that a solution of the traffic problem is available, and proper fiscal policy together with clever economical engineering will restore mobility to our cities. Rubber tires do not create mobility when they clog the movement. Controlled movement on rails will solve the problem. People don't care whether they have rails or rubber, they want movement and will pay for it. In Cleveland on suburban lines, they willingly pay 25¢ car fare and still vote \$35,000,000 in bonds to extend the rails. In Toronto, they voted 10 to 1 to build rapid transit. However, neither city attempted such a referendum without a full educational program first.

PROCEEDINGS PAPERS

The technical papers published in the past year are identified by number below. Technical-division sponsorship is indicated by an abbreviation at the end of each Paper Number, the symbols referring to: Air Transport (AT), City Planning (CP), Construction (CO), Engineering Mechanics (EM), Highway (HW), Hydraulics (HY), Irrigation and Drainage (IR), Power (PO), Sanitary Engineering (SA), Soil Mechanics and Foundations (SM), Structural (ST), Surveying and Mapping (SU), and Waterways (WW) divisions. Papers sponsored by the Board of Direction are identified by the symbols (BD). For titles and order coupons, refer to the appropriate issue of "Civil Engineering" or write for a cumulative price list.

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